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THE

WEST INDIA LEGISLATURES

VINDICATED

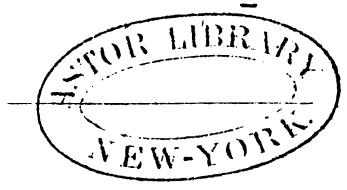
FROM

THE CHARGE OF HAVING RESISTED THE CALL
OF THE MOTHER COUNTRY

FOR THE

AMELIORATION OF SLAVERY.

By ALEXANDER M'DONNELL, Esq.



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THE

WEST INDIA LEGISLATURES

VINDICATED.

THE Resolutions of the House of Commons, relative to the amelioration of negro slavery, which were passed in the Session of 1823, having lately received the sanction of the House of Lords; and the government having avowed its intention, in language not to be misunderstood, to enforce the regulations contained in the Order in Council for Trinidad throughout the Colonies generally, it is but an act of justice to the parties concerned, to point out where the responsibility will rest, should precipitation lead to any of those evils so universally dreaded by all who are acquainted with the structure of West India society.

For the last two years the public attention has been directed to the colonial Assemblies, to discover how far they were disposed to accede to the specific measures suggested by the mother-country, for gradually mitigating the evils of slavery, and preparing the way for

its final extinction. Much disappointment has been expressed in both Houses of Parliament at the little which has been alleged to have been done, and the anti-colonial party has been active in propagating throughout the country accusations against the Colonies for the contumacious spirit evinced by their legislative bodies against every attempt at innovation. Associated with these charges are many insinuations of a very insidious nature, which have not only given rise to great misunderstanding on the part of the public at large, but have occasioned much and serious mischief in the Colonies.

It has been said, that the West India body in England acceded to the measures proposed by government, and that as planters residing here may be supposed to be possessed of larger and more unencumbered estates than those living in the West Indies, their acquiescence is a proof that the grounds of resistance, as opposing an infringment of the rights of property, are invalid; leaving no alternative but the peremptory interference of the British legislature in promoting negro amelioration.

It is undoubtedly true, that respectable West India proprietors in England did concur in many of the views of government; but some explanation is required to point out the reasons which prompted them to interpose their sentiments

between the British legislature and what is properly the province of the colonial assemblies.

In unqualified terms, and at the very commencement, it may be stated, that any suggestions thrown out by proprietors in England related exclusively to the amelioration, and not to the emancipation, of the slaves. It could never for a moment be supposed that they would interfere in matters concerning the rights of property, when the sacredness of the claim formed the strongest argument on which they relied in their appeals to the nation for justice. To have hazarded opinions favourable to projects for increasing the manumissions by compulsion would have been directly contrary to the spirit of the petition they presented to Parliament in 1823, setting forth the grounds on which their property had been invested, and claiming equitable compensation for what loss might accrue to it through the interference of the mother-country.

Besides this decisive reason against an acquiescence in the propriety of those clauses in the Trinidad Order in Council relative to compulsory manumission, every person in England experienced in West India cultivation knew well that to consult the dictates of sound benevolence, a steady plan of amelioration must be long in course of operation before any increased means of emancipation were offered to the slaves.

Proceeding upon this principle, it was a source of proud satisfaction to them to step forward, and testify their willing concurrence in plans calculated to lessen the hardships of slavery, with a due regard to the welfare of the slaves themselves, and to the security of property. On many of their estates, improvements had been introduced, which were found to be beneficial, and which they were anxious, from humane motives, to have established generally throughout the Colonies. In confining themselves to the object of amelioration alone, they conceived that their example was calculated to produce a great practical good; but in expressing their opinions and the result of their own experience, they were fully aware that they could not interfere with the discretion exercised by the Colonial Legislatures; and even this invidious task, of standing forward to speak for their fellow-colonists abroad, would not have been attempted, had not some other considerations existed of a very cogent nature.

At the period when Mr. Buxton first brought forward his motion for bettering the condition of the slaves, a very great alarm prevailed, lest intemperate discussion should lead to disturbance and insurrection throughout the Colonies. From the inveterate hostility of the anti-colonial party, it was believed, that so long as they were literally besieging the legislature with their clamourous

petitions for negro emancipation, a continual ferment would be excited, owing to which West India property would become greatly deteriorated, if not utterly destroyed.

Though the result has, in many instances, too well and fatally verified the predictions entertained at the first agitation of the question, still the line of conduct pursued by the West India body appeared on every consideration to be the best calculated to lessen, if not avert, the dreaded evils. Their object was twofold. In the first place they were desirous of taking the matter out of the hands of enemies, implacable, prejudiced, and irresponsible; and of placing it in the hands of ministers whose sense of duty and a consciousness that their future fame was at stake, would prompt them to shun whatever might be chargeable with rashness or precipitation. In the second place, it could not be concealed, that statements regarding the treatment of the slaves, coming from West India proprietors, commanded but little attention throughout the country, they being presumed to be interested parties. It was, therefore, expected, that in the situation of ministers as mediators, they would deem it an imperative duty to state fairly and unequivocally to the nation the treatment and the actual condition of the slaves, as attested to them by impartial and disinterested authorities in the Colo-

nies. It is on the testimony of such that measures of amelioration should alone be grounded.

The most sanguine expectations were entertained that, by this proceeding, much of the delusion which prevails throughout the country would be effectually dispelled. Exaggerated, if not calumnious, statements of cruelty have been disseminated with unwearied assiduity; but there could be little doubt of the speedy subsidence of the popular clamour, if persons in authority, and possessing the respect and confidence of the community would, from their places in parliament, declare, that the treatment of our slaves exhibited not that character of aggravated cruelty so generally charged. No predilection for West India interests was here required. All that was asked was the same acknowledgment in public, as had been made to deputations in private conferences.

These were the motives which influenced the West India body in England in the part they took, when many of the recent regulations were originally canvassed; and it might, perhaps, have prevented some misunderstanding in the West India islands had they been stated in an earlier stage of the business. It is true that the well-informed residents in the Colonies can sufficiently appreciate the underhand object of the anti-colonial party, in attempting to sever the

feelings of proprietors in England from those who reside upon their properties; but a large portion of the population may not have equal facilities for forming accurate opinions, and thus an angry spirit of dissent might be manifested, which would instantaneously subside when all the circumstances of the case came to be fully understood.

Government was desirous, on taking the matter into its own hands, to have a definite plan; and those who contend that no attempt should have been made in England to speak the sentiments of the Colonies, should at the same time consider, that had such policy been pursued, Mr. Buxton and his coadjutors would have never ceased to bring forward their undigested and sweeping projects of emancipation, leading to consequences, in all probability, still more disastrous than any which have ensued. Besides, it was apprehended, that had not government taken up the question, the object of that resolution would never have been secured, which pledges the nation to "a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property," and which is viewed, by the colonists, as a guarantee for the protection of their rights.

It cannot, however, be denied, that the other advantage contemplated in placing the question in the hands of government has failed in producing the effects anticipated. Ministers have never

attempted to allay the popular clamour, or to remove any of the misunderstanding which prevails throughout the community respecting the present condition of slavery, so greatly improved since the abolition of the Slave Trade. Possessing despatches and authenticated statements in detail, proving the systematic exertions of individual proprietors to have established a milder system of management, and also demonstrating the utter fallaciousness, in practice, of many of the plans of the abolitionists, they have suffered such evidence to repose quietly in the Colonial Office, and have allowed opinions to go forth to the world, not only unjust towards men who reposed confidence in their impartiality, but injurious to the character and prosperity of the British empire.

The consequence has been, that the picture of slavery formed in the mind of every petitioner for emancipation, is widely different from any thing to be found in the British colonies. From the zeal and activity of the anti-colonial party in getting up for popular exhibitions cases designed to work most effectually upon the feelings, it is not surprising that the voice of the nation should be carried to extremes, and require to be moderated by authority.

The paramount consideration has been lost sight of, that slavery, where an opportunity exists to procure fresh slaves, and slavery where no such supply is obtainable, are essentially dif-

ferent from each other. Under the one system, the motives for the exercise of humanity are weak, because, no matter how the slaves may suffer, their numbers can be instantly and easily replaced. But under the other, when all extraneous supply is cut off, the most cogent of considerations, his self-interest, prompts each proprietor to treat his people in the gentlest manner, as the surest mode of augmenting the value of his property, or preserving it undiminished.

The result is obvious, and perceptible at a glance, to any person of reflection. Yet how many angry discussions would have been avoided, and how much real advantage would result to the slaves, in promulgating, from an authentic source, the various measures that have been brought into actual practice in the Colonies, within the last twenty years, for the progressive mitigation of the evils of the system. I do boldly affirm, that the greatest obstacles in the work of improvement, that is, the impatient haste exhibited in the mother country, and the seeming obstinacy in the Colonies, would cease to exist, if the testimony of impartial persons, of the governors, the recently-appointed bishops, and other clergymen, of which government is in possession, were fairly laid before the public. Impatience is excited in England, because no improvement is supposed to be in practice.

Obstinacy may be found in the Colonies as the natural feeling of men labouring under unmerited accusations, and goaded to resentment by what they feel to be flagrant injustice. Under thesecircumstances it is no wonder that proprietors resident in England were anxious to make many sacrifices, to implore government to interpose the force of its unbiassed opinions against the overwhelming tide of clamour which set in against them. They have been bitterly disappointed; and what tends to increase their regret, is the apparent disposition to carry still further this suppression of information, thus keeping the entire colonial body in absolute subjection to the purposes of their enemies.

It is well known that at the recent public meetings the statements given in the parliamentary returns from the Fiscal of Berbice formed the groundwork for many of the charges against the Colonies. With respect to these statements, several explanations were required, which would lead to a conclusion very different from that produced by their perusal in a detached form.

It was the custom of the Fiscal's office in Berbice to keep an account of all charges and complaints preferred by slaves against persons connected with the management of properties. On the receipt of the order from government, the

mere charges were transmitted to England; but they are unaccompanied in many instances by the consequent examinations, or any evidence to substantiate the complaints, which may, for aught that we know to the contrary, have been dismissed by the Fiscal, as vexatious and unfounded. All that is reported in such cases is the bare charge preferred: it might be well or ill founded; but it would surely be as reasonable to produce the calendar of untried prisoners at any Assizes in England, and pronounce each individual guilty, as to assume the mere statements of complaint in the Berbice report as demonstrative of cruelty on the part of the Colonists.

It is the general system of unfairness pursued by the adverse party which calls for scrutiny, and demands to be exposed to the judgment of the public; but, in cases like the present, this can only be done effectually by persons in authority. If it be argued, that any colonial proprietor, acquainted with the facts, might refute such accusations, a little reflection will show, that independently of the greater weight in public opinion, it is more peculiarly the province of a higher quarter.

Such persons as Colonial Fiscals are officers of the government; and it is but justice therefore in the latter to produce, when they have it in their power, such evidence or information as is

calculated to correct wilful or inadvertent error; more especially when the omission may furnish undue advantage to hostile interests.

Another incident, as illustrative of the peculiar difficulty presented to the West India Body in putting the merits of their case fairly before the public, may with propriety be stated. He who has at all attended to the controversy on West India affairs, must be aware that two leading topics have been largely dwelt on by Colonial partisans. The first of these is the question of compensation, in the event of any injury to property by the introduction of the new regulations. The second, the fallacy of the opinion, that the negro would labour in a state of freedom.

On the introduction of the Order in Council into Trinidad, a committee of some of the leading inhabitants of the Colony was formed, to investigate and to prepare authenticated statements illustrative of these points, and to lay them before the British public. In the midst, however, of their inquiries, government thought proper to stop their proceedings, productive as they would have been of the best practical guidance for the other Colonies, in shewing what regulations could be safely introduced, and what might justly be esteemed as of a pernicious and a dangerous character.

From some of the recent debates in Parlia-

ment, it further appears, that connected with this subject there exists a disposition to withhold papers, which the usage of Parliament has, in all previous cases, rendered accessible.

The whole practical inquiry depending at the present moment is simply this—what regulations can be introduced into our colonies which will better the condition of the slaves, and at the same time respect the property of the masters?

To ascertain this point, a motion was made, to cause to be laid before the House of Commons all documents and correspondence respecting the introduction, operation, and effects of the orders in Trinidad; and it was with pain that the West Indian party found obstacles started, which tended to thwart the benefit to be expected from this important and indispensable exposition.

The impossibility of legislating upon correct principles, at a distance of some thousands of miles from the scene of operation, has always been recognised as a strong argument to check the interference of the British government in matters of internal regulation in the colonies. Unacquaintance with local peculiarities, various contingent circumstances requiring partial modification, and the want of all information upon the important point of timing, to the existing susceptibility in the negro mind, the introduction of extensive innovations, may frequently

render measures, which appear theoretically specious, impolitic in practice. If, in the experience of the last three years, an exemplification of this truth has been afforded, it is all-important to the colonial interests, as, indeed, it is to the character of the British government, to have the correspondence laid before Parliament.

It is very generally understood by persons connected extensively with the island of Trinidad, that many clauses in the order in council had to be repeatedly sent home to be remodelled, and put into an altered form, before they could be introduced as the law of the colony.

What a striking lesson is thus presented against any generalizing attempts at legislation. In Trinidad the negro population is limited; the safety of the colony is not endangered by the disproportion between them and the whites; and many predisposing causes combine to render the new regulations less difficult and critical than in the old British settlements. Yet if, in this condition of things, legislation could not be conducted for that island by the mother-country without repeated changes and renewed attempts, what could be expected in Jamaica, where so much wider a field is presented, and where the obstacles to be overcome are so much more extensive and embarrassing.

That these difficulties would be fully acknow-

ledged, and that all correspondence and documents tending to elucidate the principle would be frankly produced, was confidently expected by every colonial proprietor in England at the period when he surrendered the cause into the hands of government.

Under the fullest examination, no want of information or of foresight could possibly be imputed to the colonial department. The question is not between a British minister and the island assemblies, but between the British nation and her colonies, whether, in a word, it is possible for speculative plans, framed for negro amelioration here, to be carried into effect in the colonies with safety to the masters and benefit to the slaves.

It behoves the public to keep in view this consideration, in judging where the responsibility of many of the changes effecting in our colonies should rest. An opinion has gone abroad, that, from government having taken the question out of the hands of the abolitionists, the colonial party are possessed of sufficient influence to control the measures of the administration. This notion has been enlarged upon by Mr. Stephen in the last of his pamphlets; and the community are again and again exhorted to raise their voice to counteract what is described as the pernicious influence of interested individuals.

No person can mingle in society without being sensible how strongly this feeling has acted in raising an outcry against West India proprietors. Englishmen are hostile to the exercise of undue power in any shape; the idea of its existence goes home at once to their passions, requiring no further argument to enlist them against those who appear to have engrossed it. The observations already thrown out, show how totally inapplicable is such an imputation in the present instance. So far from the West India party partaking of influence, I do unhesitatingly affirm that the history of this country affords no parallel instance of men, possessed of equal property, having so weak a hold on the state, and being so mercilessly run down by the force of unjust accusations and rancorous calumny. To speak nothing of their misfortune in owning properties connected with a term which, like that of *slave*, forestals investigation, and marshals every feeling against them; of the difficulty there is in making men perceive, however obvious the fact, that it is one thing to denounce a bad system, and quite another to devise means for its abolition; together with the injurious delay which must take place before charges of cruelty, however groundless, can be confuted: to say nothing of these disadvantages, it may be most truly said, on the other hand, that they neither possess

those numbers, nor that intrinsic weight in the senate, that could for a moment promise them the preponderance in any great question of national policy. Let any person investigate the proceedings of Parliament, and he will at once be sensible how insidious has been the appeal to the people to exert themselves to overcome West India influence. Detached, disunited, acting without concert, it is notorious that every other party in the senate has expressed surprise at the inexplicable conduct of West India members, and wondered at their passiveness, when inroads the most fatal were making on their properties, entitled as they are on every principle of justice to receive protection. If the weak ought to be assisted against the strong; if Englishmen have a constitutional hatred of undue power in the direction of their councils, and wish to give protection, where, from weakness on one side, protection is required—it is not more than the plain truth to assert, that it is the West India party who claim the aid of the intelligent portion of the community. It is the force of public opinion which at the present moment governs the nation. As, then, it is apparent that the people at large will always exclaim against slavery in the gross, without any attempt at analysis, it is the bounden duty of the better informed to interfere, to examine a little closer into the circumstances of the

case; and to endeavour to protect the sacred rights of property on behalf of their fellow-subjects, lest a precedent may arise, of which the destruction of their own may be the ultimate consequence.

Presuming that the existence of this sentiment cannot be wholly wanting, it has been considered advisable to give some outline of the situation in which the West India party stands in England. For the worst of purposes, conclusions have been sought to be drawn, tending to delude the Colonists abroad into some act of indiscretion, and to heighten the animosity of the community against the West India system in general. The arguments drawn from the presumed relation of colonial proprietors in England with the measures of government, and the cautious distrust of the colonial assemblies, have acted more than any other circumstance to induce the people to petition for hurried enactments to press plans of negro emancipation upon all the Colonies by force.

Now it has been shown, that any interference on the part of the colonial proprietors in England related solely to amelioration and not to emancipation. The grounds for that interference, from what has been stated, must, it is conceived, remove any misunderstanding in the Colonies. It originated in a laudable desire of

placing the matter in hands where the work of improvement should proceed with the utmost caution and judgment; and where it was confidently expected that such statements would be made from time to time as must moderate that hostility, the expression of which occasions so much injurious excitement among the slaves.

Although, as before observed, much disappointment has ensued, yet the motive was commendable; and a consideration of the circumstances will show to the community how grossly they have been deceived in many conclusions drawn to the prejudice of the Colonial assemblies.

It now becomes our object to examine the grounds on which the introduction of new measures has been delayed, or resisted altogether, in some of the most important of our Colonies.

The strongest source of complaint raised against the legislative assemblies, that of Jamaica in particular, rests upon what is termed their contumacious spirit, not only in their rejection of the new regulations, but in resisting, in terms of disrespect, the interference of the mother-country.

It may here be stated, in general terms, that only the most violent of the speeches against innovation have found their way into the public papers, whilst many others of a redeeming character have been carefully suppressed. But

though no person would attempt for one moment to justify intemperate violence, yet there are really many circumstances to be considered, which should obtain for our colonial brethren some indulgence.

During the discussions in the House of Commons, however, the salutary principle might be recognised, that the work of improvement should in the first instance be confided to the local authorities, still there was too plainly coupled with it the threat, that parliament should be applied to, to overcome any reluctance by force. If then, in one breath, they were told "We hold your rights inviolable—we will not trench upon your legislative functions;" and yet in the next were threatened "But remember, if you do not act as we require, we shall in the end compel you:" I must be allowed to say, that to persons residing in the Colonies the professed respect at home for long established rights must appear a downright mockery.

The charters by which the crown confirmed their privileges to the Colonies, are held to be as sacred as any institution existing in England which may have become identified with the law of the land; the subversion of which would establish a precedent destructive of all security both as regards the interests of private individuals and the stability of the constitution. Consequently, when any attempt is made to invade the privileges

which those charters confer, Colonists view it as the precursor to an invasion of the right of private property; and, like all men similarly circumstanced, they must be anxious to resist at the very outset what they conceive to be an unjust encroachment.

If, as it has been asserted, measures proposed by this country have been indignantly, and without adequate examination of their merits, rejected, on their first announcement, the true cause has arisen on the grounds just stated. The West India proprietor considers, that if, nationally speaking, colonial franchises are to be trampled on, his private rights will rest on an insecure foundation. Fearful therefore of committing himself in any way by his personal act, he is desirous that the validity of colonial legislation should be at once ascertained. Placed in a situation of perplexity and alarm, his only course seems, at the outset, to do nothing; and, no matter what class of men we select, whether British subjects at home, or British subjects abroad, such will ever be the disposition when men's whole means of subsistence are conceived to be put at stake.

Never, in any controversy, was there a truth more striking, than that enforced in the observation of the Lord Chancellor from the woolsack on this subject. His lordship said: "That this

" measure had been more retarded by the in-
" temperate zeal of those who had engaged
" themselves in its support, than it had been or
" could be by any direct opposition which the
" enemies of abolition had the power of opposing
" to its accomplishment." (*Times*, Mar. 8, 1826.)

The sentiment here expressed, coming from one of so high a character as the personage who fills the first judicial situation in the state, cannot fail to command attention throughout the reflecting portion of the community. Arrest the progress of the alarming doctrine, that chartered rights may be infringed by an Act of Parliament produced in a moment of excitement; remove from among the Colonists the dread of having their properties utterly destroyed; and the British nation will then discover, that the humanest of her wishes will meet with respect and deference from every branch of her much-misrepresented offspring.

It is unnecessary to observe, that the question of compensation for loss of property consequent on any plan of negro emancipation is the main point at issue with every colonial proprietor. Unless this be clearly and satisfactorily kept in view in every stage of the proceeding, it would be folly to calculate upon anything like sincere concurrence in measures of improvement.

With all reasonable men, it is true, the prin-

ciple of national protection to the slave proprietor has been unequivocally admitted; but as there still prevail doubts and open dread that the broadest claims of justice may be stifled in the existing clamour, it is proper to weigh fully and impartially the reasons which have mainly tended to produce a spirit of opposition in those who direct colonial legislation. Inseparable from the feeling excited by those contemptuous insinuations which members of the British Parliament have permitted themselves to throw out against public charters granted to the Colonies by the British crown, must be the apprehension that where privileges long in possession are thus openly violated, the spoliation of individual earnings will speedily succeed.

Another circumstance which has heightened the hostile feeling in the Colonists, is the belief that the entire substance of the proceedings against them is the personal affair of Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Buxton, and the party which they head. When they have heard of the artifices employed to get up and multiply petitions to Parliament; when the internal evidence of these petitions, exhibiting the same style, the same sentiments, the same phraseology, proves them to be the wholesale manufacture of a well-organized association; when it is known that itinerant speech-makers are employed in journeying

from parish to parish throughout the British empire, to catch the notice, to inflame the feelings, and to abuse the credulity of persons, not ill-intentioned, but ill-informed; of persons rendered highly suitable to the purpose of such partisans by their love of novelty, and their thirst after the importance of having something to do which borders on popularity; the Colonists can never recognise, in such a spurious appeal, the legitimate voice of the country; nor can they hold themselves bound to regulate their conduct by its bigoted demands.

Justifiably viewing these men as their determined enemies, disingenuous as they are in their accusations, and unrestrained by prudence in their projects, the West Indians naturally resist everything emanating from such a party, as designed to ensnare them into difficulties and mischief.

The history of the career of these abolitionists strengthens this natural distrust. The Colonists cannot have forgotten, that at the period of the abolition of the slave trade, the same men who now prominently figure on the political stage, and are loudest in demanding the annihilation of slavery, were those who most distinctly pledged themselves that no such step was contemplated. Nay, the strongest plea they then urged was grounded on this assurance; they contended that as they, themselves, entertained no ulterior de-

signs with regard to the West Indies and their management, the value of estates there must progressively increase, from assigning limits to future means of production, by prohibiting any further supply of labourers.

In the same uncandid and unworthy mode of procedure, during the discussions on the Registry Bill in 1816, it was asserted, that could that measure once be effected, all further interference was disclaimed, the proprietor's own interest prompting him, gradually, to abolish the most repulsive characteristic of slavery, as the surest course to facilitate the labour of his estate.

With such professions and pledges full in view, it is reasonable to infer that much of the strong feeling evinced in the Colonies, proceeds from the contemplation of the means of proceeding thus unfairly employed towards them.

Had the recent agitation of the negro question been commenced in a conciliatory spirit, which would have been the best assurance that humanity was the real and the only object in view, then whatever inconsistency the abolitionists might betray, might have passed unnoticed. But when, instead of this, they have manifested a degree of acrimony exceeding what has marked all previous discussion, such conduct must necessarily tend to exhaust the patience and the temper of those who are its objects, and urge them to

retaliate in a spirit appropriate to the virulence of their accusers.

It is a great mistake to imagine that colonial opposition or animosity was ever directed against the British nation; such a disposition has been solely provoked by the anti-colonial party, as the prime agitators of the feeling against the colonists, while that party has, with too successful artifice, disseminated the impression, that every angry debate in the Colonies related not to themselves, or their interference, but to the British Parliament.

Could the Colonists be convinced that the British legislature and nation, while they expect that further provisions should be made for protecting the Slave by law as well as adopted in practice, yet harbour no views of injury either to their rights or properties, it cannot be doubted that they would cheerfully proceed in the revision of their slave code.

The debate in the House of Lords concerning the Resolutions of 1823, will have, in this respect, a beneficial effect. The character of the speakers who took a part in the debate, together with the absence of all appearance of rancour, will conquer and dispel much of the alleged opposition in the Colonies, and must encourage the adoption of every measure which can be safely and practically embraced.

It is evident that much must depend upon ex-

pediency. In a moment of dissatisfaction among the slaves, it might be grossly improper to grant sudden favours, encouraging them, as it would, to increase in their demands, and producing the habit of coalescing to overawe their masters. In states of society where those in subjection constitute an immense majority over those possessed of authority, too much pains cannot be taken to repress every sentiment in the former likely to inspire the belief that violence can do them service. Assuming this principle as indisputable, it is by no means correct to say, that a space of even three years has yet been presented for the work of considerate legislation. Insurrections have occurred both in Jamaica and Demerara, and alarm has been created throughout the Colonies generally, from the negroes having misconceived the extent of the measures designed for their benefit. But although these disturbances were happily quelled, is it to be supposed that excitement would instantaneously subside; or that it would be wise, whilst the embers of discontent were yet unquenched, to betray weakness by bestowing a reward upon rebellion.

No circumstance more strikingly deserves attention, than the well-attested fact, that the intemperate discussions in this country inspired the negroes with the belief that their unqualified freedom had been decreed.

It was stated by Mr. Brougham, and by Dr. Lushington, in the House of Commons, that the revolt of the slaves proceeded from the refusal to carry the new regulations into execution. Perhaps the whole controversy does not exhibit an assertion more at variance with fact. In all the trials of the conspirators, and in every instance in which it was possible to ascertain their sentiments, either from white persons who were confronted with them in the moment of their rising, or from the evidence of the slaves themselves, it was evident that one exclusive idea, that of EXEMPTION FROM LABOUR, possessed their minds. Not a solitary word was urged in regard to an altered system of coercion, admissibility as witnesses, or the power to purchase their own manumission; which were the points of chief importance in the plans of amelioration contemplated by Government. Objects of far greater importance in their eyes were expected; and it was essential that this fatal delusion should be entirely dispelled before sober and rational plans of amendment could be properly appreciated.

The first step was to show the negroes, that no good could be obtained by violence, and to allow some little time to make manifest the gross error, that the mother-country had decreed their liberty. Let such considerations be sufficiently weighed, and I think it will be acknowledged that the colo-

nial legislatures have had exceedingly little time to study the wishes of the parent state with temperate deliberation. In addition to their own apprehensions of injury to property, we have to consider the state of negro excitement, and to judge whether a period of disturbance, or one of peace, be the most advisable for making innovations.

When it incontestably appeared, from the proceedings on the trials of those implicated in the revolt, that to Mr. Wilberforce's party in England were to be attributed all the losses and mischief incurred, it would be supposing the Colonists devoid of the ordinary passions of men, if they did not express the strongest indignation at such pernicious interference. In conjunction, therefore, with the knowledge possessed by the Colonists, that with this party originate all the calumnies under which they labour in England, are to be taken the fruits of that conduct produced in the Colonies, being no other than a direct destruction of property. By this plain fact, the community must see the danger of allowing themselves to be guided, on a popular theme, by mere declamatory statements.

Those circumstances which tend most to extenuate the temper with which the interference of the mother-country has been received in the Colonies have now been noticed; but perhaps it would be improper to omit touching upon another

feeling which with many of the members of the colonial assemblies may have operated with considerable force. When men feel themselves to be intrusted with the performance of an important duty, by fellow-citizens who rely implicitly on their judgment, it must be repugnant to every natural sense of pride to find themselves degraded into mere automatons, required to yield a blind submission to the fiat of persons placed at such a distance as must necessarily unfit them, by their ignorance of local peculiarities, for the delicate task of internal legislation.

The first impulse of every man possessing independence of thought, is to reject such arbitrary domination. Without proposing a comparison between the functions of a member of the British Parliament, and those of a member of the House of Assembly in Jamaica, it is no more than a truism to say that it is equally the bounden duty of each to consult the good of his constituents. A mandate coming out from England, and announcing to the latter such dicta as "This you shall do, and nothing else," destroys every principle of the representative system; and while it assumes the character of liberality towards one party, exerts outrageous tyranny upon another.

It needs not the testimony of Edmund Burke to prove, that wherever slavery exists, those who enjoy freedom, seeing themselves a privileged

class, are much more proud of their rights than in a state of society where all are free alike. This is as much a public as an individual feeling; and those to whom the direction of affairs is committed, in small communities like those of our Colonies, have a scrupulousness and a jealousy at whatever they conceive to be an invasion of their just privileges, which, perhaps, is unknown in countries where legislation proceeds on a more extensive scale. Any one who peruses the debates in the Jamaica papers may perceive evidence of this feeling. But still it would be most unjust to suppose, that there is not at the same time in the colonial representatives a conscientious desire to protect the interests of their constituents, and a solicitude to escape the reproach of having been the willing instruments of introducing into that community, of which they are the legitimate guardians, the source of present evil and of final ruin.

When persons in England argue that particular measures, conducing to ameliorate the condition of the slave, which have been conceded by individual proprietors, cannot be injurious, and ought promptly to receive general adoption, they should in common fairness hear the reply of the Colonial Members of Assembly. The latter will tell them, that it is most easy for an individual, exonerated from the weight of public re-

sponsibility, to make many concessions in private conference with a minister, where theoretical discussion rather than practical experience is the test by which to judge of new propositions of improvement. In such a case, should a failure ensue, credit would still be given for motives of humanity; but very differently situated is the member of a legislative body responsible to his fellow-citizens for the safety of those interests they have intrusted to his keeping. Any indication of precipitancy on his part, should it be followed by disaster or deterioration of property, would cover him with obloquy, and cause his name to be handed down with execration in the records of the island in which he resided, for the betrayal of his delegated trust. No reiteration of argument on abstract principles of improvement can ever overcome so potent a reflection. Should a member implicitly conform to views originating in England, by whom will he be applauded? By unknown philanthropists residing at a distance. And by whom will he be censured? By every one around him: by men with whom he is in habits of daily intercourse and association; men with whom feelings, predilections, friendships, all conspire to promote unity of sentiment. He who expects that, in this state of things, a spontaneous wish to embrace every innovation, even where the imposing sound of

humanity supplies the impulse, can boast but an imperfect acquaintance with the human breast. Sympathy, though a governing property of the mind, extends not, with the generality of men, to a very enlarged sphere; and in judging of the disposition of a Jamaica Member of Assembly, whether inclining towards good or ill, I acknowledge I should draw an unfavourable conclusion if I perceived him acting in decided hostility to the sentiments of those whose commendation, under the ordinary action of social feeling, is chiefly coveted.

Let it not be supposed, that there is here any desire to justify the members of colonial assemblies in unqualified opposition to whatever new projects may be started from abroad, or in submissive acquiescence with the will of their electors. All that is contended, is simply that some time should be suffered to elapse to make known the merits of such measures; to mollify existing asperities; to remove gradually those obstructions, which, if disregarded, might lead to violent convulsion.

I have pointed out the dependence which must always subsist, more or less, with men living under a delegated system of government, in order to show how much greater the difficulty must ever be of procuring immediate acquiescence from responsible persons, than from those exempt

from such restraint. I feel confident that in Jamaica many planters are to be found fully as humane as any resident in England, but they are required to use more caution from living on the spot, where the least indiscretion or mistimed ardour must be injurious. Assenting to many points of amelioration in the abstract, they may frequently with regret be constrained to postpone the adoption of them until the sense of benefit as well as of safety become more widely diffused.

Should it be contended that the unwillingness and the prejudices of the less-informed white residents form a strong argument to prove that even the moderate wishes of this country will never be complied with, and that the cause of humanity being paramount, other means become necessary, I must reply that such a conclusion would suppose no improvement ever to have taken place, and that the society now in the West Indies is the same as it has been for several years preceding. Unquestionable proof to the contrary is the strong hold against speculative projects, and should induce us to hesitate before we pronounce seeming obstacles to be insuperable.

Admitting, for the sake of argument, that much prejudice exists in many of the Colonies against regulations for negro improvement, which, by promoting security, might enhance the value of estates, does not the history of most public mea-

sures demonstrate how slow is the work of such eradication of error as will practically produce good effect in the relations between two contending parties? In the question of Catholic emancipation, partisans on one side might express unfeigned surprise that gross prejudice should so obscure the views of their opponents as not to render apparent the justice and expediency of the measure. Yet those opponents might be conscientious in their resistance; and who would for a moment entertain the idea that their conviction was to be shaken by attempts at its forcible subversion? May not some analogy be found in the colonial question? If the friends of the Catholics are well convinced, that to reason with their adversaries is the surest way to convert them, and that, still, patience is required, is not thence an admonition given to many disinterested supporters of the anti-colonial party (from whom, indeed, that party derive their weight) to pursue a similar conduct? The Catholic may contend, that his case of political degradation as powerfully demands redress, as the philanthropist may claim emancipation for the negro. But who would justify the former in resorting to force or violence to attain his object? Would not such an attempt exclude him from the claim of reason on his side, and doubly strengthen prejudice against his cause? Then, what reflecting man

can concur with the anti-colonial party in heaping abuse upon the Colonists, and seeking to carry their views, not by strength of reason, but by dint of power? Is it not manifest, that if prejudice before existed in the colonies, it must by such means acquire a tenfold firmness? What was previously contemplated as susceptible of easy change, must come to be regarded as a point of honour touching the rights of individuals, which it would be meanness to abandon.

This exposition of the case is offered to reconcile, if possible, many well-intentioned though impatient individuals in the community to the gradual, but at the same time very perceptible, working in the Colonies in favour of the views of negro improvement held in this country. It is the attribute of reason as well as of civil liberty to be slow in its progress. Whether a question of national policy operates on such a scale as to divide equally the power betwixt contending parties, or whether, as is the case with the West Indies, resistless might be arrayed against actual feebleness, bullying can never hope to make a proselyte, or to forward the real interests of mankind. The remark of the ablest of political writers should never be forgotten, when liberty forms the theme, that we must not, in the ardour to lift up a degraded class, trample down the

rights of another, nor inflict unmerited injury on such as must suffer by accomplishing our end.

The present era is distinguished for the pre-eminent diffusion of knowledge, and in conjunction with the impetus thus given to the public mind, have arisen much more liberal notions in the science of government. Let any person of reflection allow his memory some range, and he cannot fail to wonder at the many changes recently adopted with applause, which were a little time before rejected as fraught with danger. The Secretary of the Home Department has recently commenced the amendment of the criminal code; and having become more enlightened, we appreciate its propriety. But was nothing of the kind ever attempted before? For many years petitions, speeches, and appeals were employed in vain; the influence of the country was opposed to change, and time had gradually to remove obstructions before the end could be accomplished. Whence then an alteration in opinion causing what was previously dreaded to become commendable? Is it not that the soil on which that opinion was to work was under different culture? It is the time requisite for this operation which demands attention. You say to the Colonists, "What stupid as well as hard-hearted wretches are you, that you do not instantaneously perceive the propriety of our views!" May not

the Colonist reply, "Look to your own history; and if, at the fountain head of arts, science, and learning, you take some half century to correct the most flagrant abuses, are you not bound, if prejudices do exist in the Colonies, to view them with indulgence?"

In the debates upon the Slave Trade, Mr. Pitt affirmed, that to attempt to emancipate the slaves would be insanity. Mr. Fox said, in 1807, that "the idea of an act of Parliament to emancipate the slaves in the West Indies, without the consent and concurrent feeling of all parties concerned, both in this country and in that, would not only be mischievous in its consequences, but totally extravagant in its conception, as well as impracticable in its execution." Lord Grenville said, that "in giving liberty to the slaves on the islands, we should do the greatest injustice to them, in giving them that which they did not know how to use, and which would only be productive to them of injury."

In 1816, we find the same sentiments avowed by all the leading abolitionists. Yet when, in 1823, a new impulse was given, and when the most momentous alterations were proposed to the Colonists, it was argued that they were obstinate, because they did not immediately adopt them. Not even the sweeping decrees of the French Revolution ever equalled the impetuosity,

with which individuals in England have sought to subvert the system of West India cultivation. And if thus, on abstract grounds of legislation, which are here exhibited the more effectually to expose precipitate proceedings, there be admitted causes of delay, let the reader judge what must be the effect when so prodigious an amount of property is placed in jeopardy.

From what has been hitherto stated, it may be thought that this line of vindication is rather of a negative character, and that no excuse remains to the colonial assemblies beyond the indiscreet violence of a party in this country, who have prevented the calm consideration of those new regulations which in the main could be safely introduced. But if any of those regulations proceed on a wrong principle, and evince ignorance, not only of local circumstances, but of more enlarged philosophical relations, they must greatly lessen the respect in which the wisdom of the parent state is held. By attempting too much, a total failure often follows, where, had judicious limits been preserved, success had been inevitable.

Having then pointed out the views prevailing generally in the Colonies, with regard to the proceedings of this country, we come now to consider the new regulations on their own merits.

Should the comments already offered have tended to moderate the censure apt to be be-

stowed on our fellow-subjects in the Colonies for their repugnance to projects started in this country, it is presumed that that censure will be transferred to another quarter, if it be shown that amid all their conflicting difficulties they have still made many improvements, and that it is questionable if the adoption of much of what remains could be justified by any person really desirous of benefiting and preserving the colonial system.

The official regulations transmitted to the Colonies, may be ranged under three distinct heads, proposing,

1st. To improve the physical condition of the slave.

2d. To improve his moral condition.

3d. To provide means of progressive manumission independent of the will of the master.

In the first two of these objects the colonial proprietors residing in England acquiesced: with the last they have nothing to do; it is solely the work of government.

The clauses of the Order in Council for Trinidad have been brought so often before the public, that to those who have in the least attended to the discussion, to state the substance of them, as relating to the first head, will be sufficient. They require,

The use of the whip abolished, so far as relates to females.

The Sunday-market suppressed, and another day appointed.

The power of acquiring, possessing, and disposing of property secured.

No separation of families in sales.

The driving system abolished.

The Order for Trinidad was naturally adapted to the state of the Slave Code actually in practice on the island; and a very great misunderstanding has gone abroad, from the supposition that all the Colonies were circumstanced precisely alike, and, therefore, required uniform alterations. So far is this from being the case, that in several of the old British settlements many of the ameliorating clauses have long been anticipated; and the idea that these settlements have done nothing in compliance with the Order has arisen from this simple fact, that most of its improvements were in previous operation amongst them.

In JAMAICA, the following enactments were passed so far back as the year 1809:—

Except during harvest, one day in every fortnight allowed the slave, besides Sundays.

Provision-grounds to be inspected; and where such are not provided, 3*s*. 4*d*. per week to be allowed by the master to each slave.

Proper clothing to be found, under a penalty of 50*l*.; proof of compliance to be laid before the vestry.

Persons discarding slaves without future provision subjected to penalties; and the owner's property made liable for their maintenance.

Hours of labour limited; and holidays at Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas, secured by law.

Use of weights and chains for the person abolished.

Ordinary punishment limited; and cruelty subjected to fine and imprisonment.

Right to amuse themselves at dances, &c., enacted.

Mothers of six children exempted from work; of the observance of which, as well as of their comfortable maintenance, proof is required on oath.

In 1816, the spirit of amendment was still further pursued.

Mill-work on Sundays was prohibited.

Premiums awarded to the mother and the nurse for every child born on a plantation.

Magistrates, on complaint of slaves, to inquire and proceed against offenders.

In 1821:

Capital punishment was made subject to approbation of the governor, under his sign manual, as in the execution of whites.

In 1822:

Penalties were enacted for employing the slaves of another, for reward or otherwise, on Sundays.

In BARBADOES, the disposition of the Legislative Assembly to pursue a similar course of amelioration may be seen by the following provisions of their Consolidated Slave Act of last year. It is true that this act has not been confirmed by His Majesty in Council, from some objectionable clauses having been introduced, arising, in all probability, as was observed by Lord Bathurst in his despatch, from the framers of it having copied the loose phraseology of former enactments.

Slaves committing any capital crimes to be tried by three justices and twelve freeholders of the parish where the crime is committed, upon oath.

When prosecuted as a criminal by owner, the accused to have the assistance of a solicitor.

In case of an appeal, execution to be stayed ten days.

Proper clothing to be provided, under a penalty on the owner.

The punishment of pregnant women commuted for imprisonment.

Magistrates empowered to remit the punishment of slaves stealing food, if urged by

want; and the treasurer to take charge of any slaves whose owners cannot adequately maintain them.

The wilful murderer of a slave shall suffer death without benefit of clergy.

For wanton cruelty or confinement without proper support, a penalty of 25*l*. Justices shall, on information of such offence, summon accuser and accused face to face. Marks of unlawful punishment to be taken as sufficient evidence.

For maiming and mutilating a slave, the party shall be punished by fine and imprisonment, and the treasurer take possession of the slave, and sell him to a master of humane repute. For a second offence, the party shall forfeit the whole of his property.

No other instrument to be employed in whipping but such as is used in His Majesty's army and navy.

Persons fixing iron collars, weights, or chains, subject to fine and imprisonment.

With respect to ANTIGUA, the accounts of the legislative proceedings have not, as yet, been transmitted to England. The governor observes, in his communication of 14th November, 1825, "Since the receipt of your lordship's despatch of the 20th August, the labours of the joint committee of the two Houses have been incessant, and

they are now going on progressively, and with that earnestness which the nature and importance of the case demands."

Private letters speak in strong terms of the exertions of the committee.

In DEMERARA, the Court of Policy have acceded to all the leading regulations relating to amelioration, with several improvements upon the draft of the Trinidad Order.

In BERBICE, Lord Bathurst had sent out instructions to the Commissioners of Judicial Inquiry to hold a conference with the governor of Demerara, for the purpose of assimilating as nearly as possible the regulations between the two Colonies. Before promulgating the new enactments, it was deemed expedient to have the approbation of His Majesty's government.

In ST. VINCENT'S, the new enactments provide that—

Slaves are to be allowed twenty-six days in the year to themselves, besides the usual holidays, under a penalty of 50*l.*, and sufficient land for cultivation and maintenance to be provided.

Sunday-markets to be over at ten in the morning.

Record-book to be kept of crimes and punishments above ten stripes. Book to be produced to magistrates under a penalty of 20*l.*

Driver prohibited from carrying whip in the field, under penalty as for misdemeanor.

Slaves to give evidence, under the restrictions defined by Lord Bathurst.

Record of manumissions, and limitation of fees on ditto to 1*l.*; and not selling slaves in certain cases separate from the estate; enacted in 1820, and now re-enacted.

In St. Kitt's:

Slave evidence has been legitimatized. Punishment mitigated generally.

In Grenada:

Slave Evidence put on entirely the same footing as white.

Punishment mitigated generally.

Onus probandi thrown on the accuser.

In Tobago:

Punishments above 12 stripes to be in presence of free persons other than the person ordering.

Drivers not permitted to punish.

Slave evidence admitted.

Guardians of slaves appointed.

Twenty-six days in the year allowed, besides the usual holidays.

In Dominica:

Persons accused of ill-treating slaves, to be examined on oath, and if contumacious, to be considered guilty.

Slave evidence admitted in certain cases.

Public whipping of women abolished—private whipping and imprisonment substituted.

Reputed husband and wife not to be separated, nor children sold from parents under 15 years of age.

Married mothers of four children to have one day, and of six, to have two days, in the week to themselves.

In the BAHAMAS:

Several of the regulations, regulating labour, and providing against the separation of families, had been carried into effect by former enactments.

The proceedings of the legislature in what remains have not yet been transmitted to England.

From this general outline it will be found, that the only regulations of importance which the majority of the Colonies have not adopted to the extent contemplated, relate to the mode of coercing labour, and the punishment of females.

It requires no argument to show, that the distinguishing feature of slavery is the power of the master to enforce the cultivation of his estate. Destroy the authority required for this, and at once you terminate the system, and totally ruin the proprietor. The sudden introduction therefore of any law producing misconception in the

minds of the negroes in a point of such vital importance, must create infinite mischief, and entirely thwart throughout the Colonies the efforts which are making for giving effect to the several regulations by individual exertion.

It is the discretionary power resting with the master which enables him to effect many of the most essential improvements in the system of slave labour, by the opportunity it affords him of holding out encouragement to the well deserving, and of exercising rigour with the vicious. Attempts to lesson this dependence of the slave upon the party most interested in his welfare may multiply appeals to the magistrate, but will assuredly never diminish the amount of punishment. It is the object of every person who has the management of an estate, to have a definite quantity of work performed with willingness and alacrity by the slaves, as securing the greatest ease and satisfaction to himself. Many efforts are thus from time to time made to task labour, and by degrees this greatest of all ameliorations in the condition of slavery becomes regularly established. But still it is the power to recur to the old practice of coercion, in case of refractory conduct, which chiefly facilitates the operation of the change in each of its stages; and until the negroes can sufficiently appreciate the motive which induces these changes, it

appears very injudicious to precipitate their introduction, when in a very few years they would obtain them in the natural progress of improvement.

In five of the Colonies the punishment of women by whipping has been abolished altogether. It cannot be denied that in England this regulation commands unqualified approval, and that many impartial persons have felt great surprise that its adoption should be delayed in any part of the West Indies.

Though I warmly applaud the humanity of such a feeling, I am still of opinion that many circumstances are not sufficiently considered, having a tendency to moderate our ideas as to the improvement which this regulation would produce. We are not, in a question like this, to contemplate our own habits and those of civilized society generally, but the habits of the negro. In my work entitled *Considerations on Negro Slavery*, in which the whole subject was examined in detail, I showed the marked differrence of estimation in which a female is held among the negro population, contrasted with European manners; and maintained that it was erroneous to expect a higher tone to be given in morality and civilization by attempts to raise the sex into what we conceive its proper station, until manners and habits are essentially improved among the males; and this, as has been often

observed, must be accomplished by a very different process from that of taking out of the hands of the manager a power of correction, which the husband would then exercise with much greater severity. On many estates I am firmly persuaded the motive and the principle would be utterly mistaken. But it is equally certain, that as improvements, which are sincerely desired by every white of respectability, are cautiously introduced, the example will spread with such rapidity as will quickly remove every obstacle to confirming them by enactments, and thus establishing them generally. Whatever may be said in this country to the contrary, a great desire is evinced by all persons having the management of properties to acquire the credit of humanity, and they are perfectly willing to imitate milder systems of government, whenever they find they can do so without impediment to the business of the plantation.

The abandonment of the most repulsive feature in the punishment of females having taken place in some of the islands, will speedily follow in the remainder; but even should delays occur, the English public should remember, that but a very few years have elapsed since a humaner spirit in this particular first prevailed among themselves.

In contending that amelioration, to be efficient and salutary, should commence with individual

proprietors, it is not to be inferred that every thing is to be left discretionary, or that amendment in the insular slave-codes generally is not required. The argument simply is, that where an improved method has been adopted, from a desire to facilitate labour, on some estates, an example is afforded, which shall produce such spontaneous imitation as to occasion the principles of any new enactment not to be mistaken by the negroes.

Some proprietors, if left to their own disposition, may still, either from ignorance or other causes, adhere to the old mode of coercion. For such it is that the law has to be passed. They can find no solid grounds of resistance, because their negroes will have for some time witnessed on surrounding plantations the mode of management now to be introduced among themselves.

Such must ever be the natural progress of improvement in a state like that of slavery. Practice must precede the law. If this be a reversal of the ordinary course of things, a little reflection will remove the apparent anomaly. So long as the slaves constitute the most valuable description of the proprietor's property, and he is precluded from increasing their number by any other means than that of rearing them, their welfare and his own become inseparable. Every method is consequently embraced that can be

devised to improve their condition, compatibly with the due performance of labour. But some men may have a better system of management than others; they may time circumstances with greater judgment; and avail themselves of improvements which essentially raise the condition of the slave, while the quantity of work performed may not only continue undiminished, but be possibly increased. The example attracts observation, and so prevails with others; then is the time, and not an instant sooner, to make this improvement, by express edict, general throughout the colony. During this progress of primary amendment, other new experiments in negro management will be made in the quarter where the first originated; they will in a similar manner extend themselves; by degrees they cease to be optional, and become law; and thus is a higher state of society progressively but firmly established. It is the attribute of human operations to be progressive. Slavery has many stages in its degree of irksomeness; and if we take the natural course of events for our guide, we shall study, not to reverse their order, but to preserve their regular gradation. To ingraft upon the negro character the habits of industry, so that daily labour without impending coercion may become habitual, is the great undertaking. This, I trust I have shown, must and can only

originate with the masters. It has virtually occurred in the West Indies. Many of the calumniated members of colonial assemblies have successfully tried the experiment; and the question simply is, has the example yet become so well-known, and been so justly appreciated, as to justify its adoption as a positive law? In judging of this, which is not an abstract principle, but a point of local expediency, who are the best judges—ministers in England, or authorities on the spot? If the individuals who legislate for the Colonies have in several instances, of their own accord and on their own estates, ventured on the required change, is there any proof that they are averse to it in principle. Is it not rather demonstrated, that they have in view the safety of the colony; and that they feel that the time has not yet arrived to frame enactments, which, though unaffected themselves, might inflict injury upon others.

The regulations comprised under the SECOND head, regarding the progress of moral improvement, have found such concurrence and support in the Colonies, as must prove gratifying to every benevolent mind. It should, indeed, remove much of the obloquy so generally heaped upon the colonial body, on the score of morality.

Dissemination of the principles and precepts

of religion, and provision of the means of education among the slaves, are the means looked forward to in this country as the main basis on which to amend the system. In this particular the Colonists have come forward with a promptitude and a zeal which must for ever refute the charge that they are restrained by fear from enlightening their slaves.

I appeal in direct terms to the community, if the prevalent idea of slavery does not suppose instruction fatal at once to its existence, tending as it must to make men rebel against a system depicted as one of cruelty and wrong.

That the greatest exaggerations in this charge of cruelty are indulged, I think must be put beyond all doubt, when the spontaneous manner is considered in which the Colonists have given their aid to forward the views of government in regard to moral instruction. The testimony of the bishops, repeatedly adverted to in parliament, is decisive in proof of the facility on all sides afforded to the furtherance of their arduous object.

In the diocese of Barbadoes, enactments have passed, by which all slaves hereafter to be born shall be baptized within six months, and a baptism certificate given. Marriages are required to be performed gratis by the clergy of

any persuasion, and the contract to be legally respected; and similar provisions adapted to secure the best interests of religion.

In Jamaica, the Ecclesiastical Bill has followed implicitly the wishes of the bishop, and liberally provides for such an augmentation in the numbers of the clergy as shall be adequate to dispense the blessings of religious instruction to the whole negro population.

In addition to the solid basis thus laid for amelioration, are subsidiary enactments indirectly ministering to the same object. Of this description are the law empowering the negro to receive and enjoy bequests without any limitation; and others of a similar nature, tending to advance him in his feelings of self-respect, and thereby to effect that which is the sure forerunner of civilization and improvement.

Confidently assured that whoever looks into the official communications of the two bishops, will be satisfied that the West Indians require no vindication as regards their attention to the call of the mother-country for their promotion of moral improvement, I shall refrain from further enlargement.

But there is another point of some importance which I have reserved for this place, because, perhaps, the strongest arguments on either side have reference to the state of moral feeling. The

Slave-evidence Bill of Jamaica has attracted much attention, and in the debates of the House of Commons, as well as in discussions out of doors, it is generally adduced to show the obstinacy of the Colonists. It is maintained here to be a law absolutely necessary for the ends of justice, to afford security to the negro against violence and oppression, and yet, in spite of reiterated demands from this country, it was in the very last session refused.

Without attempting an unqualified justification of the Jamaica Assembly in this particular, it is nevertheless, but right to notice the leading reasons assigned for their rejection of the measure. It was urged that the only safe guarantee of the integrity of personal evidence was a sense of religious obligation. A new era had commenced in the colony, but the means devised for religious instruction among the slaves had but just begun to operate; and it was surely advisable and requisite to suffer the lapse of some period of time before its fruits could be appreciated or even apparent. Clergymen of respectability were examined as to their opinion of the negro capacity to understand the obligation of an oath, and it was found that with great numbers the superstitions of Pagan worship were not yet eradicated. If no means had been adopted to remove this obstacle, then the argument in favour of the

measure would have been stronger, because it would be a choice of difficulties, and the expediency of adoption, though exposed to many objections, might have predominated over the evils of indefinite delay. But in the face of an altered system adapted to remedy every such difficulty, and to make the change work smoothly and to the satisfaction of all parties, it was by many thought unwise, or at least unnecessary, to forestall the beneficial labours of the clergy, where no real injury could ensue from the delay, commensurate to the possible mischief of precipitation.

The bare desire for instruction often acts but feebly on men engaged in labour; but when enforced by such an excitement as is given by a pastor's impressing on his flock that increase of privileges is attainable, and attainable only by their own efforts, their emulation is aroused, and they make tenfold progress in the work of improvement.

For years yet to come the clerical establishment may judiciously avail itself of these helps to forward their endeavours; and it was contended in the Jamaica House of Assembly, that a hasty surrender of the privilege to be thus earned, instead of raising in the estimation of the negroes the value of morality and religion, would be deeply prejudicial to that object which every party held to be so valuable.

Independently of this broad principle, particular local difficulties may have influenced members in their rejection of the Slave-evidence Bill: the multiplication of cases of trial in the supreme court; the distance from which it might be requisite that many witnesses should be brought, and the consequent injury to proprietors in the loss of their services on every petty, and, perhaps, groundless litigation. Many subordinate alterations might be required in the courts and in the administration of justice generally, which deserved serious consideration, and might involve much practical detail.

It is not more easy to propose, than it is, in many cases, difficult to execute. Before the community pronounce unqualified condemnation, they should consult experience, and inquire of themselves if they may not in their ardour have overlooked the possible obstruction of latent difficulties. It is the conviction, that such actually exist, which has prompted me to vindicate the conduct of the Jamaica Assembly. If objections had been made to the principle of the new measure, I should have been silent; but from the reasons given, it appears, solely, a question of expediency; and I have little doubt that when the wishes of this country become known in their full degree, compliance to the utmost practical extent may be relied on. Candour, indeed, obliges

me to acknowledge that, balancing all the circumstances of the case, and giving due attention to the arguments urged by the Jamaica members in opposition, which I admit to be cogent, I think no injury would ensue from passing the Slave-evidence Bill. Any mischievous interference with domestic management I cannot admit; at the same time, I know enough of the negro character to be aware, that cunning will be employed to deceive the most vigilant clergyman, and that many a one will pass himself off with them as a most religious character, who is, in reality, an arrant rogue. But we are not to take the exception for the rule; nor should we wholly overlook how innoxious these dreaded evils have proved on actual trial elsewhere.

Still the sentiments expressed in Parliament and prevalent amongst the intelligent portion of the public, regarding the Jamaica Assembly, in the question before us, are harsh, undeserved, and inconsiderate. It is not a question of undisputed simplicity; there is in it latitude for debate; there is matter to be examined, and there are prejudices to be overcome, all of which, I think, from what was formerly stated, regarding the slow progress of all salutary legislation, claim large allowance. Though I should, myself, vote for the reception of slave evidence, yet I cannot hesitate to affirm, that instances may be adduced, in

the enlightened Parliament of England, of laws, far more obviously demanded than this extensive innovation in Jamaica, being put off session after session, through sheer prejudice. If liberality be the order of the day, I would bespeak a slight tincture of it in favour of the Colonists, to place them, at least, on a level with our own parliamentary orators.

Let us see what time has elapsed for inquiry in Jamaica, to make sufficiently known the various clauses of the bill. In the session of 1824, the motion was first made. The mover, however, finding the house unprepared to discuss the question, wished to withdraw his bill; this was opposed by an individual member, who, on insisting that the question should be put, was the only one who voted in its favour. What does this prove? Not, I am inclined to think, obstinacy in those who rejected the project, but unfitness in point of time for its introduction. An alarming insurrection had just been quelled, rendering any such discussion, at that moment, peculiarly dangerous. Last year it was again brought forward, and discussed in a manner which soothed even the bile of Mr. Brougham, and extorted from him a compliment upon the several speakers. The bill was now read twice, but lost on the question of its commitment, by a majority of twenty-four to thirteen. Viewing this alteration in the disposi-

tion of the house within the period of a single year, what may we not expect in another? Should any degree of weight be attached to my preliminary views, as to the difficulty of effecting changes in legislation, I have strong hopes that this accusation against the most valuable of our Colonies has been greatly qualified, if not entirely removed.

We come now to the most important of the points at issue. The regulation enabling the slave to manumit himself, without consent of his master, strikes at once at the principle of the system; and the resistance to such a measure being unanimous throughout the Colonies, the various objections to it demand the closest investigation. There cannot be a doubt that the extraordinary measure of inserting such a clause in an order of council, professing solely to ameliorate slavery, has excited alarm in the proprietors of West India property, and lowered their estimate of the justice of the British Government, far beyond any other portion of these proceedings. It is in a word to take upon the latter itself the vast responsibility of incurring claims on the nation for deterioration of property to an immense amount; for such must be the effect of persisting in the regulation: and its own acts, and the resolution of the House of Commons, have pledged the nation to compensate any such loss. To say nothing of the incongruity, the unphilosophic

blindness of mixing up provisions designed to ameliorate the lowest state of slavery with others applicable only to the highest, and only permissible, in fact, when all inducements to prolong the condition were about to cease, the declaration of the Lord Chancellor from his seat on the woolsack, that West India property is under national protection, calls loudly on the country to provide a fund, adequate to indemnify the loss which must speedily ensue.

Then it will be that the wisdom of those statesmen who have hazarded this specimen of legislation will be closely scrutinized. A claim upon the public purse soon leads to public examination of the grounds of the demand; and it is to be feared, that smoothly as things now appear to work, this test will exhibit a different result. Firmly convinced that though I utter unwelcome truths, resentment will give place to other feelings, if I succeed in showing that there is still time to correct a principle radically wrong, I shall proceed to examine the bearings of this important clause in detail. I feel assured that some fallacies exist, which, if properly pointed out, will rebut the many accusations against the West India Colonies.

Every one is aware that the question of Free Labour constitutes the pith of the Colonial controversy. If the negroes will not work in a state of freedom, it is manifest that the lands, the

buildings, the extensive sugar machinery, far exceeding in proportional amount the agricultural stock of this country, become entirely lost to the proprietors. This important subject I examined at length in my *Considerations on Negro Slavery*. I there pointed out the causes leading to industry; traced the operation of those habits which stimulate to exertion; and demonstrated, as I conceived, that where the facility of procuring food was great, occupying, for instance, but one day in the week, it was utterly preposterous to expect six days' labour from a free peasantry. I instituted comparisons between society in different countries, in different stages, and adduced statements to show, that even in England, the chief abode of civilization and of industry, our own mechanics, in those prosperous periods when their accustomed wages could be earned with half the ordinary labour, never worked more than three days in the week. The concurrent testimony of persons of unquestionable character and information conveyed to me from various parts of the kingdom has confirmed my views; and I cannot but remark, that no one adherent of the anti-colonial party has thought it safe to contest them. Nearly contemporaneously with my publication appeared a copious series of well-attested facts, most ably stated, in one of the daily prints, under the signature of *Vindex*,

proving by actual experience that wherever free negro labour had been tried the experiment had failed. At this period the adverse party were indefatigable in their efforts to mislead the public on this point, both to promote their enthusiastic projects of emancipation, and to bring their interested speculations on East-India sugar into notice and repute. Indeed, all other parts of the discussion are subordinate. Under these circumstances, then, what can the community think, when in all recent proceedings not an attempt at reply, not a solitary argument, not even the remotest allusion has been offered on the question of free labour. Passing over the various contemptible effusions of the African Institution, we find in all higher quarters where information might be expected, a careful avoidance of the theme. In the *Edinburgh Review*, which travels out of its way as a critical journal, to heap abuse on the West Indies, there is not an attempt at analysis on philosophical principles, though were impartiality regarded, such might be expected by its readers. Mr. Brougham, too, who clearly understands the subject, as is evident from that part of his work on colonial policy relating to slaves, in which he has reasoned from Malouet, as carefully avoids the topic.

But this negative proof that the argument of the West Indians is correct, was followed by

that which placed it beyond all doubt, in the recent discussions in the House of Commons. In a debate between Mr. Wilmot Horton, Mr. W. Smith, and Mr. Hume, which it is surprising that the public journals have not more noticed, it was stated by the first of those gentlemen, that government had fully experienced, from the returns from the Winkel department in Berbice, relative to the condition of the apprenticed Africans, that the negroes would not work when free. Mr. Smith, a most zealous anti-colonist, was constrained to acknowledge that in this condition of things emancipation would be most impolitic at the present moment, and must not be contemplated.

It is thus apparent that the question is materially narrowed. The delusive idea of a free black population cultivating sugar in the West Indies is finally dispelled; and taking the position as a general ground-work, I shall proceed to investigate the bearings of the new measure proposed to be introduced in regard to manumission.

This regulation allows the negro to free himself independently of the will of the owner. It declares that if a slave demand his manumission at a price below his alleged value, and the owner refuse the application, then the chief judge shall summon the parties before him, one appraiser

shall be appointed by the owner, another by the protector, and an umpire by the chief judge, who shall value the slave by appraisement. That this will at first view appear fair to the public generally, as well as expedient and reasonable, I willingly admit; it is its plausibility which has caused it to be so perseveringly pressed upon the West India legislatures. It is conceived, that when the master gets the value of his slave he cannot complain of having to part with him. The slave, in return, acquires his liberty in the most advantageous manner, by his own industry: there is no general excitement leading to turbulence, all takes place gradually, quietly, and harmoniously. But, unfortunately two vital considerations have been overlooked.

What is the slave to do when free?

And what is to become of the property sunk by the proprietor in buildings and machinery?

I apprehend that, like many other seemingly brilliant movements in legislation, the government will be found in this case to have advanced only to the threshold, and to have stopped short where the real difficulty commences. Our position is, that the negroes will not work in a state of freedom; from which it follows, that the Colonies must be ultimately lost to this country. A class of society would succeed, rude in manners, retrograding in their previous degree of civiliza-

tion, unable and unwilling to procure for themselves those exchangeable comforts which properly form the attribute of civilization, and sinking by such deterioration into all the barbarism of savage life.

But it is contended, that, acknowledging on general grounds the accuracy of the inference, it should be remembered, that the new regulation operates not generally but individually. No universal rule against indolence can be admitted. If a negro, working all the week for his master, is so assiduous as to labour extra hours, by which he accumulates sufficient to purchase his manumission, say from 100*l.* to 150*l.*, in some cases from 200*l.* to 400*l.*, is this not proof positive that the seeds of industry are so deeply rooted as to secure its continuance when he has ultimately attained his freedom? I persuaded myself that I had shown this argument to be fallacious in my former work; but, from recent proceedings in both Houses of Parliament, I still find that in a misunderstanding here has originated the new measure. When so profound a statesman as Lord Liverpool expresses an expectation that in such instances industry will continue, I admit that the case cannot be so clear as I had previously supposed it, nor am I, in consequence, surprised in observing the tone of public opinion.

In commencing then to investigate this point, let us inquire into the inducements for a man in slavery, and the same man in a state of freedom, to acquire a sum of money. The passion to hoard for the sake of hoarding is, of course, not the stimulus to exertion in either case. His object is to purchase something in exchange, something which will be equivalent to, or rather exceed, in his estimation, the irksomeness of earning its price. In a state of slavery, then, what is this equivalent? It is with the slave the most covetable of all objects, liberty, the prospect of future idleness. In attaining to this, he has a visible, a tangible object to contend for, constantly possessing his thoughts, and prompting, where the magnitude of the allurement can overcome present indolence, to continued effort. Let us fancy a negro at work in a field in the West Indies under a vertical sun, and guess at his predominant desire. He thinks of the luxury of bodily relaxation, of bending over a brook beneath some shady tree, watching the movements of the fish, and partaking of the delicious coolness of the scene; or he indulges the exciting idea of chasing game among the woods for the gratification of his appetite. These enticing objects lead him to reflect on the means for their attainment. He finds that a sum of money will procure it; and snatches at the

opportunity of amassing such a sum, by the sale of stock, and poultry, and vegetables, which he has ample means to rear. Now, when the object for which we have beheld the impulse is at last attained, will he still toil? Not for an hour as a hired labourer. He worked before that he might realize idleness, and because he had an inducement; he will now desist, for that was the object he proposed to himself; he has attained it, and has now *no inducement*. There is nothing now to purchase—nothing in the whole range of his conception that constitutes an equivalent. During his state of slavery, a mighty inducement constantly urged him forward. When he reached his hut in the evening, and fondly counted over the dollars he had slowly earned, did he regard them as playthings calculated only for idle amusement? No; he knew well that they were the means of eventually procuring for him an inestimable boon, and they served to urge him to exertion which should have no cessation till his object were accomplished. Man, we are told, is a creature of habits; and it is the obviousness of this truism which has led many persons, without inquiry, to imagine, that by the time a negro has amassed his ransom by his own industry, he will have contracted such habits of application as will thenceforth become almost constitutional. But it is necessary to reflect that these habits are all foreign to him; they are

opposed to his natural bent; the very intensity of the stimulus will leave him in a state of inertness when thus suddenly withdrawn.

But even persons intimate with the theoretical principles of labour are apt to mistake the nature of these temporary habits. They imagine them firmly ingrafted upon the negro character, and consider them as an advancement in civilization too permanent to be reversed. Such an opinion denotes confusion in judgment; and it views but half the inquiry. Its fallacy is speedily exposed by a simple question: How are the earnings to be spent? In searching for the answer, we discover that nothing whatever has been done, and that not one motive exists, to induce the negro to work in a state of freedom. The habit of voluntary exertion in slavery, and the habit of voluntary exertion in freedom, are not only dissimilar, but they are diametrically opposed. In the former, the individual is prompted to save, for a definite end. In the latter, the only inducement to labour is that he may spend. Whilst the negro is in pursuit of this first object, he is checking, not nurturing the germ of future industry. The sooner to attain the desired end, he saves all he possibly can, that is, he keeps down his artificial wants: those wants can only be established by their gradual indulgence; therefore when liberty is at length attained, any increased gratification, such, for instance, as that of better lodg-

ing or superior clothing, is neither desired nor thought of. The cost of subsistence in the West Indies does not exceed half-a-crown a week; the rate of wages approaches to five and twenty shillings. Thus then, when a negro can so easily earn all that, in a tropical climate, his wants require, what enjoyment can you hold out to him, coupled with the necessity to work throughout the week, that can outweigh the attraction of indulging himself as above described. To teach him to spend his earnings upon an enlarged indulgence in personal decoration is the only apparent mode; but this, always supposing him the creature of habit necessary for your argument, you have effectually prevented, by compelling him to habits of rigid self-denial throughout the years it took him to realize his price of manumission.

This, I trust, will be sufficient to prove the fallacy of the opinion recently expressed, even in the House of Lords, that negroes who free themselves will continue to be industrious.

For the sake of perspicuity, I have confined myself to the contemplation of the negro character in the abstract. When I come to treat of the interests of the proprietor, I shall distinguish the difference in this respect between the old and the young men; the confounding of whom together in their views and feelings, especially by rea-

soners on the West Indies, has given rise to much misconception. In either case, here, however, the principle is the same; for if the man advanced in years thinks less of his own liberty, but frees his children, in the result we shall still behold industry superseded by idleness.

It has been intimated, that even granting the above conclusions, yet as a greater degree of happiness would be secured to the negro by giving him his liberty, it is injustice to withhold it; slavery is a stain upon the national escutcheon; and it behoves us to get rid of a vicious system, and to retrieve the country's character, at whatever cost. Now, whatever seductive charms a life of sloth may appear to possess, I much doubt if a dispassionate analysis would prove it to be a state of happiness. Neither the eloquence of Rousseau, nor the declamation of the Abbé Raynal, can shut our eyes to the turbulence, the bloodshed, and the anarchy prevailing where men are left to the unbridled indulgence of their passions. We must institute comparison between the industrious cultivation of the West Indies and the license of the African character elsewhere; and then I think that no real friend to his species will deny the former to be preferable.

As to the specious plea of clearing the British character from the stain of favouring slavery, we must reflect that it is out of our power to dimi-

nish it. Aggravate it we certainly may, and must, if anti-colonial principles prevail. Whilst Europe consumes the produce of the tropics, it will always be supplied to her. Therefore, if we disable our colonial fellow subjects from furnishing what we demand, foreigners will not be slow in coming to supply our wants; and since this can only be effected by increase of cultivation, to be accomplished by *fresh importations* of labourers from Africa, it must be pretty evident that the real interests of humanity forbid the change. Will any man then avow the false philanthropy, which would redouble the sum of African suffering, in order that Great Britain may ostentatiously display clean hands? Had we, indeed, originally found the negroes on our West India Islands, we might with some propriety be called upon to leave them to their own inclinations again; but having committed the original sin of transporting them from their native land, it is a sacred duty to watch their welfare, and this can only be done by looking forward through distant generations for their civilization.

It has been thought proper to show, at the outset, how the regulations under investigation would operate on the negroes themselves, that the arguments on which the proprietors ground their resistance may be impartially weighed. By

meeting projectors on their own principles, and showing them that their views are quite untenable, they may be disposed to hearken with a readier ear to the complaints of those they are likely to injure. Where a measure is once discovered to be erroneous in conception, it is not so difficult to point out that it may prove unjust and dangerous in execution.

Deterioration of property is the evil apprehended by the masters, in the event of the negroes being permitted to claim their own manumission; and that such a deterioration would ensue, on a very large scale, I think can be demonstrated.

In the present state of West India cultivation, the value of a negro is not determined by his sheer bodily strength, as in the earliest stage of slavery. Intelligence is a prime quality, the display of which cannot be commanded or controlled by the master. The value of ordinary field-labourers may be 100*l.*, but some one may be worth 300*l.* Why is there this difference? because he is that most valuable of servants, one who takes a personal interest in the interests of his master, who anticipates his orders, and who spurs on his fellow-labourers to discharge their duty, or repairs their neglect by his own exertions. If some are thus raised above the ordinary value, others again fall below it. There

is many an idle fellow who only distinguishes himself by giving trouble; he is continually drunk, unfit to be trusted in the slightest particular, and would be gladly got rid of for 50*l.*

Now, let us suppose the practice of compulsory manumission introduced. A run for freedom becomes the vogue, and the worthless vagabond finds that he can procure what he so much coveted with comparatively little exertion. At the same time the well-disposed character, prompted by his natural feelings, thinks equally about his manumission, and goes to his master to inquire his price. He is told 300*l.* "What!" he exclaims, on hearing the largeness of the amount, and reflecting on the time required to raise it, "such a rascal as that to get free after only a few months' labour on his provision-grounds, and I, who have studied my master's interest, to wait for it for years!" Is it to be supposed that he will remain content under such a hardship? He will consider the causes of this difference in value. He will perceive that a new era has commenced in the colony; that profligacy obtains easily the highest reward, whilst to merit it is all but refused. He will not be long in finding his remedy, and nothing will be easier than to suppress those qualities of mind, or practices which he now finds to be his greatest evil. He will no longer manifest that assiduity

and care which caused him to be looked on more like the foreman of a factory in England than a mere labourer, but which now, instead of being a source of pride and satisfaction, constitute his greatest disadvantage. The whole operation of an altered line of conduct is the easiest imaginable; it is entirely negative, and involves him in no danger of punishment. By merely suppressing his former intelligence in the business of the estate, and confining himself to the bare discharge of his allotted task, his value may dwindle from three hundred pounds to one hundred. Even supposing that, when he has acquired a certain sum, he should exceed all limits in his plan of self-depreciation, and provoke the most rigorous treatment from his master, how long can this last? He knows that he has the means of procuring his freedom at no very distant period, and this reflection bears up his spirit, until he has finally exhausted the patience of the proprietor, and obtained his object.

If it be contended, that the appraisement will be regulated by the previous character of the slave, and that any artifice he might employ to lower his real value will be detected by the appraisers, it may be answered, that at all events you will have made him thenceforth a discontented labourer.

But it seems in the highest degree superficial

to contemplate the present operation alone of such a measure, and to overlook its effect upon the rising generation. No sooner would this law be passed, than the whole of the youthful class, whose faculties were just dawning, would be taught to suppress every thing like acuteness, and to stifle every indication which seemed to promise industrious habits, and their necessary result, advancement in civilization. Even admitting that at the present moment the value of most of the prime people upon estates throughout the West Indies is sufficiently appreciable by those likely to be made appraisers, still we know how rapid are the changes in white society in our Colonies; and at the end of five years, for instance, is it to be conceived that equitable consideration would be accorded to the proprietor, if, in the interval, the negro became conscious that the more he deceived those around him, as to his true capability and value, the more easily could he obtain his manumission.

Let us take a longer period, say ten years. Here, it is evident that the general policy which the interests of the negro population prompted them to pursue would be more extensively understood and acted upon. Those who had obtained their own manumission, and desired to see their younger connexions freed likewise, would impress upon them the line of conduct best calcu-

lated to keep down the value of their services to the proprietor. Thus, through plans not partial or accidental in their operation, but systematic and permanent, the increase of knowledge would be perverted to the practice of deceit, and future civilization proceed on a basis of universal profligacy.

The hours of labour in all the Colonies are now regulated by law. The leisure time afforded to the negroes is considerable; and such is the nature of the climate, the fertility of the soil, and the facility of rearing stock, that the opportunity to save money is great enough to afford every advantage to the slave towards attaining his object. On the other hand, the value of the master's produce is in no degree controllable by him; he has no plea to urge in the European market relating to the cost of production; the price of his commodity is compelled to conform to the selling rate of foreign produce. If, therefore, the master cannot take away the leisure time allotted to the negro by law, nor deprive him of his grounds, while there exists no possibility of raising his value with the appraisers, by raising the price of colonial produce, are not the interests of the entire negro population put in direct opposition to those of their masters; and will not this feeling progressively extend itself, rendering, in each succeeding year,

the principle of appraisement more disadvantageous to the latter?

Grant to the negroes the possession of the least intelligence, or that they possess the propensity of men to consult their own ease and ideas of happiness, and the conclusion appears indisputable, that the difficulty of procuring manumission must gradually diminish, and at each step inflict injury on the proprietor.

The value of a negro is comparative; it is determined by the general disposition and prevailing character of those around; and if there be any simultaneous impulse among the rising generation to lower the return of their services, any reference to previous character becomes nugatory, and can afford in an appraisement no safeguard to the interests of the owner.

In this state of things, before we contemplate further the extensive deterioration of property, let us examine the boasted advantages to accrue to the blacks. The wholesome subordination of the employed to the employer must be subverted. A premium is held out to encourage debauchery, idleness, and crime. The precepts of religion will be perverted to favour hypocrisy, and the dissemination of knowledge will more clearly teach the means by which the colonies may be ruined; yet such is the tendency of the highly-lauded resolution of Parliament for promoting "the well-

being of the slaves." Such the wisdom of the regulation, which, with singular infatuation, parties in England have reprobated the Colonists for not adopting, as a proof of the judicious moderation with which the British legislature tempered its interference.

I wish not to stretch the argument, or to exaggerate the evils in my opinion inseparable from an acquiescence in this particular with the views of government; but I entreat any impartial person, upon the grounds of humanity alone, to reflect upon the total absence of those habits produced by artificial wants in a state of freedom, as previously described, and to contemplate in their stead the various inducements to craftiness and dishonesty which have become habitual to the negro during the period he was accumulating the price of his manumission; and I appeal to such person, if this be the right course to produce an useful, industrious, or virtuous citizen.

If the term "well-being" have any reference to civilization or to virtue, the power of procuring manumission by compulsion is directly opposed to its spirit. Such a mode of manumission fosters vice in the progress to its attainment; and in its consummation, from the absence of a regularly-established habit of spending earnings on a higher species of wants, it serves to perpetuate barbarism.

When this gloomy picture regarding the class which attracts the sympathy of the public, is contemplated, it is not presuming too much to affirm, that increased censure must await those who have precipitated the measure; nor will such a feeling be likely to be lessened when the amount of the compensation due to West India proprietors for deterioration of their property comes to be ascertained.

It has been shown how property in Slaves must be virtually diminished when all reciprocity of interest between the two parties, the capitalist and his cultivators, is torn asunder. Here is, undoubtedly, the chief consideration, claiming positive provision to be made for any possible loss, before the Colonial Legislatures could think of adopting the views of Government. What then must be the astonishment of the reader when he is informed, that in all the arguments, admonitions, threats, conveyed in despatches from this country to be laid before the Colonial Assemblies, not one solitary allusion is made to the strongest objection against the measure. Well, indeed, may the Colonists complain that they are treated disingenuously. The disregard or avoidance of what forms the major portion of their argument must, necessarily, weaken their confidence in the British Government, and indisputably justifies their distrust.

Independently, however, of having, on the premises above enumerated, their claim to indemnification fairly acknowledged, and fully provided for, by the British Parliament, previously to any new enactment regarding compulsory manumission being passed in the Colonies, there are other grounds equally demanding proper provision which Lord Bathurst, in one of his latest despatches, has alluded to, but which he has at the the same time endeavoured to prove not sufficiently valid to prevent the passing of the enactment. In a recently published pamphlet also, entitled, *The West India Question Practically Considered*, the point is canvassed at length, and the writer seems satisfied in his own mind, that the measures of Government, without further stipulations, sufficiently ensure the proprietors against any contingent loss consequent on the compulsory manumissions of their Slaves. In the reasoning employed, as in the case with the colonial office despatches, the main difficulty is left unnoticed; but even in discussing what is left, there appears to lurk considerable fallacy in his views.

It has already been observed, that on a sugar plantation, the property sunk in the buildings and machinery is very considerable, the whole of which must be lost to the proprietor, if deprived of the requisite assistance of his labourers. Now, at the present period, the quantity of land in cul-

tivation, as well as the extent of buildings and machinery, will bear a proper proportion to the number of the gang capable of labour. Let a reduction take place, and it is manifest that unless other hands can be procured, the lands, buildings, and machinery, become deteriorated in value; they cannot be fully employed, and the culture of the estate suffers, not only directly from privation of its efficient labourers, but additionally from the disproportion which will then exist between the extent of fixed property, and the instruments designed to call it into use. A certain number of men is required for the cooperage, to attend the boiling-house, to keep up the dams or roads, and many other duties of a like nature, besides field-labour: take away the most able and useful of these, and even though you pay down their full personal value, would the income from the estate bear the same relation to the capital sunk as before; such as would be the case if an agriculturist in England contracted his production? Certainly not, because that capital consists, *not exclusively* of slaves, but also of the works on the plantations, which are fixed, and not of transferable value, and so far as the whites are concerned not applicable to any other purpose than that of producing an exchangeable commodity to be disposed of in a distant market. Free all the negroes, and the amount sunk in the land and

works is entirely lost; consequently, any approach to that freedom, where no means or probability exist of engaging hired labourers, must injure the proprietor to an extent corresponding to the inadequacy of his gang to the keeping up the former cultivation. The truth of this proposition depending solely upon the reasoning, that a free peasantry working for hire will not succeed in the West Indies, it is not necessary to urge it further in this place. If I have shown that the idea of black labourers, working for a white capitalist for hire, is preposterous, it must be admitted that a distinct and palpable claim to compensation is thus necessarily established. The writer of *The West India Question Practically Considered*, acknowledges, that the proprietor is entitled to some remuneration beyond the apparent or intrinsic value of the slave, when freedom is obtained by compulsion, but the how, the when, and the where, are by no means satisfactorily defined. In a matter of such grave importance, there should be no ambiguity betrayed. Do the advocates of government propose that this extra value of the slave shall be included in the appraisement, serving, in effect, to make it more difficult for him to procure his manumission? That such is the idea intended, would appear from the following passage in the pamphlet just mentioned. The writer, after show-

ing that the principle of compensation must depend upon the facility or impossibility of substituting free labour for the labour of the slave, concludes thus:—

"Consequently, if the value of the slave be determined upon the only equitable principle which appears to belong to the transaction, namely, the deterioration of the property of the master, *the price of such slave must carry with it the most equitable principle of compensation.* In every special instance the appraisers will necessarily have to consider and to estimate the loss to the master. That loss will be measured by a comparison between the profit which the labour of that slave produced to his master, after deducting the expense of his maintenance, and the profit which the master will derive from the labour of a free black, after deducting the wages which it will be necessary to give, in order to induce such free black to execute the duties previously performed by that slave; and the price will be raised or depressed accordingly, under a rigid application of this principle." p. 88.

Now, I think the application of what has been already written must effectually demonstrate the unsoundness of these views. The very same feeling which will prompt the negro to lower his value in ordinary circumstances will equally operate, nay will stimulate him to increased unwillingness and disaffection towards his master,

the moment an attempt is made to put the coveted manumission farther from his reach. With singular simplicity, the projectors of the remedy have so contrived it that it absolutely aggravates the grievance.

The value of a prime man-slave is, we will say, 300*l.*; the higher his personal value the greater his *relative utility* to the plantation, that is to say, the greater must be the recompense to the proprietor for the loss arising from superseded cultivation. Let us suppose this relative utility estimated at 150*l.*, to be added to the slave's value under ordinary circumstances, making the total 450*l.* Here then, if dissatisfaction existed previously, because some fellow-slave of bad character got free for a fourth of the sum, do you not aggravate the evil, and absolutely compel the trustworthy individual to renounce his good qualities when you make him feel that they are the greatest impediments to the attainment of his natural wishes? The higher you go in the scale, these effects increase in a geometrical series; and if my original position be sound, the collateral consequences tend more effectually to expose the utter inefficiency of the alleged safeguard to the proprietor.

The author of the pamphlet seems perfectly aware that many men on a sugar plantation may be of the greatest possible value to the proprietor, and absolutely indispensable to the cultivation,

solely from their zeal, intelligence, and alacrity. How, then, is the loss of such men to be supplied? This writer says, "If it be suggested as an objection, that the planter may lose a slave, whose skill in a particular employment, and acquaintance with the circumstances of the estate may render the loss of his services irreparable by the substitution of the labour of a stranger, the answer is, that the planter must endeavour to train up, among his own slaves, a succession of persons who may be ready to replace any such valuable men whenever they may be abstracted from the estate under the operation of the manumission clause."—p. 92.

Let us accordingly suppose young people so trained up and employed, is it not obvious, at a glance, that in place of a remedy we have a reiteration of the evil. These young people, in their turn, imbibe similar sentiments to their predecessors. The same difficulties, the same demands for compensation, which applied to the one class will equally apply to the other; and we still revert to the fundamental and generic position, that the moment you teach the negroes that *their interests are opposed to those of their masters*, each generation must prove, as affects tropical cultivation, more inimical to the welfare of their white employers. Never, indeed, could a weaker plea be advanced, than that the

clause in the Trinidad Order in Council provides in itself, on the principle of appraisement, for adequate compensation to the master for the loss of his efficient slaves. The viewing of the question in a detached and narrow sense, regarding the negro as a mere machine, supposing him devoid of feelings, and unaffected by recurring changes, can alone account for men's persisting in so gross a fallacy. But it is to be hoped, that when the claim of the proprietors for deterioration of property is admitted as a broad and indefeasible demand of justice, no false notion of consistency will sway the British cabinet to persevere in error.

The more prominent parts of the measure have now been examined; but there are still objections remaining, which it would be improper to overlook.

Agreeably to the new regulations, families cannot be separated when sold by the proprietor; but in the case of a negro purchasing his own manumission, separation is allowed.

It is well known that on most estates, not one-fourth part of the gang can be considered as really efficient. There are the old and infirm, together with the young and helpless, all of whom the proprietor is obliged, by law, to support. Let us attend now to the effect produced on the proprietors by individual manumission.

The young, able-bodied men, or those in the prime of life, where the passions are strong, and all the temptations to idleness present themselves in full force, will lose no time in endeavouring to free themselves. On attaining their object, they can retire into the interior, amuse themselves at will, take wives probably on some neighbouring estate, and in the event of a family, take good care that it shall be provided for by the proprietor during infancy; but when the children's services are just beginning to be looked for, the father will then, in all likelihood, come forward and seek their manumission. On the contrary, the old slaves on an estate, in whom the passions have subsided, will not seek their own manumission. They will very shrewdly ask, why should they give money for their liberty when in a very few years they will be infirm, exempt from work, and entitled to that support gratuitously from their master which, in a state of freedom, they would have to earn for themselves. They will, consequently, devote their earnings to the liberation of their children. Thus the operation of the measure becomes two-edged. The young and efficient free themselves, or are freed by their aged connexions, by which the labour of the estate is suspended for want of hands; but the aged and infirm remain, to burden the proprietor with the cost of supporting them; so that to render a property unproductive, and at the

same time to augment its burdens, becomes a parallel result. Thus the system is to be subverted, and the proprietor left without the hope of remedy, beyond that to which he is entitled from the British nation. Every person acquainted with the West Indies can testify that such would be the mode of proceeding as a general principle.

It is frequently asserted that the negroes are so contented with their lot that they would not purchase their freedom. This is, in many instances, undoubtedly true; and it speaks volumes against the unceasing charge of cruelty imputed to the Colonies; but I must, at the same time, be allowed to observe, that so far as I have had opportunities of judging, it is the *old people* who express this sentiment. Let a new excitement arise, let manumission become the fashion, and there need be little hesitation in affirming that though, from the causes stated, they might not seek to free themselves, they would feel differently affected in regard to their offspring.

The last objection to which it is necessary to allude relates to the probability, that the means of manumission would be improperly obtained, or supplied from a fund raised in this country for the purpose of exterminating slavery, regardless of the attendant injury to the white capitalists.

Though a great practical difficulty would, doubtless, arise in the Colonies in guarding

against theft, yet securities could probably be provided, such as incapacitating negroes convicted of larceny for purchasing their freedom in the manner pointed out by Lord Bathurst, by which this objection might be rendered not insuperable. But, I fear, that government has not sufficiently weighed the chief danger of the other, that of the abolitionists raising, by the specious arts they are not ashamed to employ, a fund in this country for the express object of buying manumissions. As this party is utterly reckless of consequences, and as their utmost energy would be devoted to the termination of slavery with a haste as precipitate as their present zeal, the danger to be apprehended is, that they might betake themselves to the expedient of purchasing all the *female children*. What reference could here be had to previous character? What calculation entered upon regarding relative value? Is it not manifest that the property of each proprietor becomes, in this case, totally extinct with the lives of his male negroes?

On consideration of all these circumstances, it is not surprising that resistance, firm and resolute, should be exerted against so fatal a regulation as should empower a slave to manumit himself without consent of his master.

The right of compensation for deterioration of property can be established under three distinct heads.

First.—From the separation of families; the proprietor being obliged to support the infirm and the useless, while the able have withdrawn themselves from him.

Secondly.—The loss incurred on the buildings and works, from the numerical reduction in the gang.

Thirdly and chiefly.—The incalculable injury resulting from the disposition of the negroes, generally, to depreciate their individual value.

The detriment ensuing from the first two cases, is supposed, by Lord Bathurst, in his despatch to Demerara, and by the apologist of government, in his pamphlet above quoted, to be provided for under the system of appraisement. But this idea has, I think, been entirely refuted under the obvious operation of the third: it would prove but a shifting of difficulties, to press with increased weight.

There is, then, but one source whence compensation can be obtained,—the British nation; and I fearlessly put it to the community, if on the grounds stated, the Colonial Legislatures are not warranted in their dissent from the measures of the government at home in those innovations, not relating to the amelioration, but to the emancipation, of the slave.

Occasionally, a hint is thrown out, that if losses are incurred, eventually the British nation must indemnify the sufferers.

The author of the pamphlet so often quoted, however strenuously he may contend that the principle of appraisement in the Order in Council for Trinidad provides, in addition to the personal value of the slave liberated, *invito domino*, for compensation on account of the injury caused to the property generally, feels obviously much real doubt on the subject. He observes, that if it be argued, that the purpose of the manumission clause will be frustrated, since no slave will be able to work out his own freedom, under the *accession of price* which will take place, the answer is, that "*it is for this country, if it be sincere in its anxiety to put an end to slavery, to lend pecuniary assistance to such slaves for the accomplishment of that purpose.*"

Here is, indeed, recognised the only tangible mode of indemnifying the proprietor; and it is understood to be the present sentiment of government, that in case a positive proof of loss can be made out, they contemplate that the injury should be made good from the public purse? But where is this avowed? Not openly, manfully, in responsible places, or in Parliament, but merely hinted at indirectly, or in anonymous pamphlets. The Colonists have no dread of their RIGHT to compensation being disputed, that is clearly established by the resolutions of both Lords and Commons; but their apprehension is of the practical difficulty in obtaining payment.

If men, in dread of speedy ruin, could indulge in mirth, is it possible for the Colonists to control such emotions, on contemplating the expedients employed to cajole them in this particular, by councillors of state. In what form is such an ulterior claim to be made out? To whom has it to be preferred? What is the chance of its obtaining common attention, much less of commanding payment? Are men, in a word, supposed to be mad enough to risk their entire property by a step in the dark, or to subject it to the inexplicable ambiguities of official declarations? If a minister seeks to soothe the Colonists, and addresses them in some such terms as "My good friends, why not trust to our careful consideration; it is true the case is, as regards your interests, undefined and ambiguous, but it is not convenient for us just now to decide it; we are, however, impartial; you have not the saints to deal with; be satisfied with our promises, and should you each of you lose some thousands of pounds, we will endeavour to have justice done you." Will not the Colonists reply—"Give us proofs of your impartiality—we can best judge of the future by the past; but if, for the last three years, you have stood aloof, and permitted us to be borne down by a mighty torrent of misrepresentation which you might have easily diverted; if on a solemn appeal to your justice, you have shown small disposition to vindicate the truth in

our behalf; and if even it indubitably appears that you have been obliged to succumb to our enemies, are we justified in believing that our claim for indemnification will be fairly met, unless we have a specific and a distinct provision made before we incur the loss?"

It is to be presumed, that to British subjects, no matter whether at a distance, or our immediate neighbours, justice is the same; and the question before the nation simply is, would it be wise to adopt the measures relating to manumission independent of the master's concurrence, at that cost which will certainly be incurred if such measures are carried into effect? If the decision be in the affirmative, then it becomes the dignity of parliament to allow no shuffling, prevarication, or pitiful expedients, but fairly and promptly to provide a fund for the occasion. Thus far are the Colonists concerned.

But it is still to be hoped that in viewing the main question, for the welfare of the empire, enlarged considerations will prevail, and that our colonial system is not doomed to fall. For my own part, and I hope without wilful disrespect, I would pronounce on the manumission clauses contained in the Trinidad Order in Council, the most unqualified censure that any public measure could receive. They are unphilosophical, unstatesmanlike, and unjust. They are unphiloso-

phical, because they display an utter unacquaintance with the principles of labour. They are unstatesmanlike, because, with a singular narrowness of view, the effect produced in the Foreign Colonies, by an abandonment of the cultivation of those of Great Britain, seems, by no means, appreciated. The number of slaves landed in the Brazils and Cuba, within one year, appears by the last parliamentary papers published on the subject, to have been upwards of 50,000; and it would, one would think, be politic to see this traffic stopped, before we tamper with our own Colonies. Lastly—That the project is unjust, has, I persuade myself, been clearly and amply shown.

When any man peruses Mr. Canning's speech in 1823, particularly that passage in which he alludes to the difficulties to be surmounted; the time required to eradicate such an institution as that of slavery; all tending to show that, for the present, amelioration is the most that should be thought of; it is impossible not to be struck with the inconsistency of at once embracing a measure so sweeping as that of making the slave virtually independent of his master.

From the subsequent debates in Parliament, it would seem, that the established laws of the Spanish Colonies served as the origin of the measure. Lord Lansdowne, in the House of Peers, dwelt strongly on this point, and concluded

that it would be a gross reproach to the British nation to allow more humane regulations to exist in the Spanish Colonies than in our own. There is, however, a distinction of so momentous a character, as to render the seeming analogy completely inapplicable. In the Spanish Colonies, when the law or practice first obtained, the Slave Trade still continued. If a proprietor lost the services of one slave, he could be instantly replaced by another, so that no possibility of loss existed. The great difficulty now in the West Indies, is the impracticability of procuring the services of another man to substitute those of the one manumitted. If this could be obviated either by means of hired labour, or by purchasing other slaves, it would signify little to the planter what number of his people got their freedom.

Trinidad, where the regulation is now in force, was a Spanish colony; on its cession to Great Britain, the laws enacted previously to the abolition of the Slave Trade remained unaltered. It is therefore most unfair to hold it up as an example to the other Colonies, and to maintain that what is introduced there should serve as a precedent for universal adoption. Both as a general principle, and as affecting investments in property, as shown in the remonstrance from the Court of Policy in Demerara, the case is inapplicable.

It is stated by this Court, that " the Trinidad Order in Council has not affected the principle of

the Spanish law, which allows a slave to enfranchise himself by purchase. The Dutch law in this colony (as also the British law in our old settlements) gives no such right whatever to a slave. Here the interest of an owner in his slave is that of a fee-simple absolute; he purchased upon that tenure, he has continued to hold upon the same, and cannot be deprived of that legal title without a direct violation of property; the law alone can deprive him of it in consequence of some judicial process, by which he is compelled to surrender it in satisfaction of some debt. In Trinidad it is otherwise: a person purchasing a slave in that colony knows beforehand that he acquires only a precarious title in such a slave, which depends on the ability of the slave to purchase himself. But let the Spanish law be what it may, it can never alter the existing law of this colony, and it may fairly be inferred from Lord Bathurst's letter, that no subversion of the law is intended."

It does not distinctly appear, whether the privilege of the slave to procure his own manumission existed by positive enactment in the Spanish code, or whether it was merely a local usage, which insensibly obtained and grew into a practice. The best informed Spanish authorities differ on the point; but it is still certain that the usage took its origin in that state of things where no individual proprietor could ex-

press dissent, or feel at all aggrieved. It may not be improbable that the general voice of the white residents encouraged the introduction of the measure. During the period when the Slave Trade was in full vigour a continual fear of insurrection prevailed, and by multiplying the number of free persons the danger might be greatly abated.

If those members of the House of Peers who contended that the British regulations might safely go as far as the Spanish law, bestow the least reflection upon these considerations, they cannot fail to perceive how widely different are the two cases, and how great would be the error of legislating for the Slave Trade stopped, as for that trade in full prosecution.

It is the cessation of this supply which constitutes the great era of improvement in the system of slavery. The two great interests concerned became thenceforth united. Among the Romans, so soon as wars began to be less frequent, and opportunities to obtain fresh slaves diminished, we find that amelioration commenced; but never was it attempted to give the slaves manumission without the full concurrence of the master. The latter was always looked up to as the person from whom all benefit should flow. Far from attempting to oppose the interests of the two, the freedman, even after his liberty had been confirmed to him, was bound to

pay strict reverence to his former patron. By the law which exacted from him what was called "obsequium et reverentia," he was required to attend his former master on all public occasions, and to pay him marks of reverence and honour; if he ever failed in the observance of these duties, the patron was intrusted with the power to punish what was otherwise unpunishable by most human institutions, ingratitude, and to call the undeserving freedman to his pristine condition of slavery. (See *Heineccii Antiquitates Romanæ*, lib. 9, § 1. Cod. de Ingrat. Liber.)

By these laws, we perceive, that it was the object of the Romans to impress upon their slaves the policy of devotion to their masters' interests. As the system advanced, and began to dissolve of itself, from the returns of labour assimilating to the cost of subsistence, the slave relied upon his faithful and long services in being not thwarted but assisted by his master in the attainment of his freedom.

To follow thus the natural course of events would, unquestionably, be the proper policy in the West Indies. In arguing the question, it is uniformly supposed, that the master is, by nature or by principle, opposed to the emancipation of his slaves; and that were the matter left exclusively to him, he would never, through all time, suffer them to manumit themselves. This is quite erroneous. It is under certain circumstances

only that he is adverse, because he knows well that his interests would suffer. Those circumstances are the lowness of the cost of subsistence, and the paucity of the wants consequent on civilization, owing to which, there exists no inducement or stimulus to make men work in a state of freedom. What occasion, therefore, is there for compulsory manumission. *The moment the slave is fit for freedom, not one objection will be opposed to it by his master.* He would rather have freemen on his estate, if freemen would work, than he would have slaves; and in this situation, simply pursuing his own advantage, is it not monstrously impolitic to take out of his hands that lever with which he so beneficially aids the interests of humanity, rewarding the well-disposed, and withholding reward from the undeserving.

But it will be said that it will take a great period of time before this mode of establishing freedom can come into effect. What is the language of Mr. Canning on the subject? "Take time! to be sure it will; to be sure it should; to be sure it must!—Time!—Why, what is it we have to deal with? Is it with an evil of yesterday's origin?—with a thing which has grown up in our time;—of which we have watched the growth—measured the extent, and which we have ascertained the means of correcting or controlling? no; we have to deal with an evil which is the growth of centuries, and of tens of

centuries; which is almost coeval with the deluge; which has existed, under different modifications, since man was man." What then is to be done, availing ourselves of the lights of science, to abridge this time? I affirm, to make it the master's interest to be *the first* to desire the manumission of his slaves. How is this to be effected? By teaching the slave that a state of liberty is to continue a state of industry. And what mode can be devised to attain this end? A mode, in my opinion, so obvious, as to make it matter of surprise that it has not yet been tried. Establish a system of FEOFFAGE: let the crown take possession of the unoccupied land, and by exacting rent, compel the black, whether free or in slavery, to labour. This may be pronounced impracticable. Should it prove so, then I boldly assert that nothing can be done, and you must allow to the institutions which have stood for centuries, centuries to terminate.

Having, in a former publication, illustrated this subject, I shall abstain from additional comment here, further than the notice of an objection started by the author of "The West India Question practically stated:" it is one which he seems to think insuperable, but in which opinion I cannot coincide. Speaking of the continental colonies, to show the fallacy of any constraint to keep the blacks industrious when made vassals of the crown, he argues that the black would

only have to cross a narrow creek, when he would find himself in Columbia, enjoying uncontrolled liberty. Now, may we not ask, what is it that prevents his doing so at present? If the authority of the state be sufficient to keep the slaves in submission to their masters, it is surely not inadequate to preserve their allegiance when directly subjected to the crown.

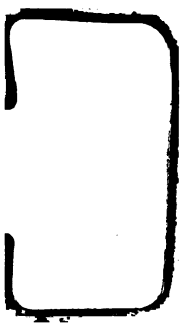
Any approach to the institution to which I have alluded must, I feel convinced, be beneficial throughout the Colonies; and I would call upon the several Assemblies to pass, in their earliest session, that primary measure, which would far outstrip in benefit anything that has yet been done, and which should form, indeed, the basis of negro improvement. A VAGRANT LAW would strike at the root of many evils in West India society, and would draw commendation from all intelligent men in this country. Even the anti-colonial party could not withhold their acquiescence: do they maintain that the blacks will work when free? Why, then, a vagrant law can produce no hardship. Will they not work? Then, if industry be the precursor of civilization, some constraint is indispensable. It was stated by Earl St. Vincent in his place in the House of Lords, that between the years 1820 and 1823 four thousand slaves were manumitted in Jamaica alone. This fact effectually contradicts the imputed hostility to manumission on the part of the masters.

But it is only necessary, with those acquainted with such a place as Kingston in Jamaica, to call to their remembrance the debauchery and the excesses of the free black people resident there, to prove the necessity of some such judicial restraint as the act I have suggested.

I have now, I persuade myself, satisfactorily vindicated the Colonial Legislatures from the accusation of resisting attempts at emancipation, and confining themselves to the sole work of amelioration.

In proceeding with the latter object, I think I have shown that they have already done much, and that it is imputable to the indiscreet proceedings in this country that they have not done more.

As a concluding proof that the work of internal legislation should be left to their sole guidance, I would request the reader to view the ameliorating acts passed during the last twenty years, and to obtain authentic evidence of the still greater practical alleviations of slavery, and I doubt not of his pronouncing that the history of no state or society of men exhibits so rapid an improvement as has characterized the West India Colonies.

THE END.

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